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RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 8729
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RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 3101
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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: DEUTSCHE WELLE STRINGER BUSHUYEVA UNDER CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION

REF: A. 06 TASHKENT 512

[1](#)B. 06 TASHKENT 755

Classified By: AMB. JON R. PURNELL, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Prosecutors have opened a criminal investigation against Deutsche Welle stringer Natalya Bushuyeva for alleged tax evasion and working without a license. She has been subject to harassment since 2005 for her reporting on human rights issues. The criminal investigation against Bushuyeva could prove awkward for the German government, which has been more than willing of late to take Uzbek professions of a desire for reform and better relations at face value. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Prosecutors have opened a criminal investigation against Deutsche Welle stringer Natalya Bushuyeva. According to her lawyer, Sukhrob Ismailov, authorities have charged her with tax evasion and working without a license. Bushuyeva's accreditation reportedly expired in 2005. Bushuyeva, an Uzbek citizen, was summoned to the Prosecutor's Office on March 23. According to news reports, if found guilty, she could face anywhere from six months to three years in prison. Bushuyeva's mother told Poloff that she has not seen Natalya since March 24.

[1](#)3. (C) Bushuyeva is reportedly the first journalist to be charged under a media regulation that came into effect last year prohibiting journalists from working for foreign media outlets without accreditation (ref A). Bushuyeva, who has reported extensively on human rights issues, has been subjected to occasional harassment since the Andijon violence of May 2005. In March and April 2006, she was the subject of a smear campaign in which anonymous individuals posted advertisements for "personal services" around Tashkent listing her telephone number under a suggestive photo. Other fliers listed her apartment for rent. Bushuyeva said she suspected that the National Security Service was responsible (ref B).

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: The criminal proceedings against Bushuyeva could be potentially embarrassing to the German government, which has been promoting dialogue and engagement with Uzbekistan. The Germans have also been more than willing to take official GOU professions of openness and interest in reform at face value. The harassment against Bushuyeva fits within the government's well-established pattern of targeting journalists who work outside of state-controlled media organizations. Although a handful of Uzbek citizens are

still able to work for foreign wire agencies, most international news outlets such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, BBC World Service, and the Institute for War and Peace Reporting have been shut down.

PURNELL